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Democratization in the Arab World

A Summary of Lessons from Around the Globe

Laurel E. Miller and Jeffrey Martini

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Preface

The hopes and drama of the Arab Spring captured the world's attention early in 2011. As events unfolded during that year and the next, and into 2013, it quickly became clear that daunting challenges lay ahead for postrevolutionary Arab countries. In *Democratization in the Arab World: Prospects and Lessons from Around the Globe,* a book published by the RAND Corporation in 2012,[1] we explored the conditions and decisions that are most likely to influence the success of democratization in countries undergoing political transitions. We identified the main challenges to democratization in the Arab world; analyzed how other countries around the world that transitioned from autocracies have overcome or failed to overcome similar challenges; and suggested ways that the international community can help transitioning countries strengthen their fledgling democracies.

This publication is an updated version of the summary section of *Democratization in the Arab World.* It is largely the same as the summary published in 2012, but has been modified somewhat to reflect recent events and to be suitable for publication as a stand-alone document. An Arabic translation of this updated summary is being published simultaneously. For references to sources used in our research, readers should consult the main text and list of references in *Democratization in the Arab World* (a PDF version is available at no charge on the RAND website). We wish to acknowledge the work of our co-authors

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[1] The full text is available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1192.html.

of the much more detailed 2012 volume, without which we would not have been able to produce this updated version of the summary.

Democratization in the Arab World: A Summary of Lessons from Around the Globe

The successful revolts in 2011 against long-entrenched autocrats in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia were remarkable achievements.[1] The uprisings reverberated across the region, sparking similar efforts in Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen that have met with varying degrees of success. Even in some states that have thus far proved immune to large-scale unrest, the precedents successively set by Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya have spurred governing elites to accelerate political reform. To be sure, none of these uprisings has yet culminated in a truly consolidated democracy and the region is still home to many deeply autocratic regimes. Nevertheless, the utterly unexpected Arab Spring has catalyzed a political sea change.

The countries where revolutions have succeeded have already faced daunting challenges, and more lie ahead. Prognosticators still can not be certain: Will the Arab Spring lead to a flowering of democracy? Will the loosening of the political systems in these countries unleash dangerous forces of extremism or ethno-sectarian conflict? Will new autocrats replace the old ones? Will surviving autocrats in the Arab world harden their positions or see the need for at least gradual change?[2] The

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[1] This publication is an updated version of a summary excerpted from Laurel E. Miller, Jeffrey Martini, et al., *Democratization in the Arab World: Prospects and Lessons from Around the Globe*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1192-RC, 2012.

[2] For simplicity we use the term "Arab world" to refer to the Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa, thus excluding non-Arab countries of that geographical region.

soundest forecast may be that the future course of these unpredicted changes will remain unpredictable for some time to come.

Even so, it is possible to identify conditions and decisions that are likely to influence whether the regime changes will lead to democratization. Newly empowered leaders in the region can benefit from a better understanding of how democratization has proceeded in other parts of the world. And those formulating foreign policies and aid programs intended to encourage and assist democratization processes can benefit from understanding of the factors that reinforce and undermine democratization. To offer a basis for such an understanding, the RAND study from which this summary was drawn addressed three questions:

1. What are the main challenges to democratization that Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen and other Arab countries experiencing political change are likely to face in the coming years?
2. How have other countries around the world that emerged from authoritarianism overcome or failed to overcome similar challenges?
3. What can the international community do to help transitioning countries overcome these challenges and strengthen their fledgling democracies?

Answers to these questions do not provide a road map for democratization; the processes under way are too complex and the circumstances in the countries too diverse for one-size-fits-all guidelines. But, unquestionably, there are lessons to be learned from the many and varied political transitions that have occurred throughout the world in recent decades.

Thus, we approached the study's questions principally through comparative analysis. We analyzed transition experiences in all the world regions where relevant political changes have occurred since the mid-1970s in what the political scientist Samuel Huntington famously

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Turkey is sometimes considered part of the Middle East, but in this study we examined Turkey's democratization experience together with several southern European cases.

termed the "third wave" of democratization, and we identified lessons that could be applied to the Arab world.[3] We focused in greatest detail on the challenges in Tunisia and Egypt because these were the countries where revolutions had been completed when we embarked on the study, but we aimed to identify more broadly applicable lessons. We supplemented this work with an exploration of scholarly literature on democratization. Our overall goal was to bridge the academic world's extensive investigation of democratization processes and the policy world's interest in determining how to respond to the events of the Arab Spring and to produce pragmatic, policy-relevant conclusions.

Theories of Democratization and Our Analytical Approach

Although not a rarity, full-fledged democracy was not the world's predominant form of government before the third wave. In 1973, Freedom House, a non-governmental organization, rated just 29 percent of 151 countries as "free," 28 percent as "partly free," and 43 percent as "not free." By the end of 2011, the percentages of free and not free countries had roughly reversed: 45 percent of 195 countries were free, 31 percent were partly free, and 24 percent were not free.

Spurred by democracy's dramatic advances over the past 40 years, scholarly interest in democratization mushroomed. Scholars have generated a vast literature that explores the many dimensions of democracy and of democratization as a process of political system change. They have revealed the tremendous diversity of democratization experiences, but, because of that diversity, have struggled to produce generalizations about the causes and pathways of democratization. Even for countries within a single region sharing similar background conditions, the variation in transition experiences has been emphasized.

The once-popular notion of a "transition paradigm," in which countries move from authoritarian rule toward democracy through

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[3] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman Okla: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

a sequence of stages, has been largely rejected. Many countries have been seen to settle into a "gray zone" of diverse forms of government where autocratic and democratic features are combined. Such countries are no longer seen as simply stalled on the road to democracy. In our study, we use the term *transition* not to imply that countries undergoing political change tend to follow a set, linear pattern but, rather, to indicate our concern for the *process* of democratization, in particular, the ways it can be influenced and the possibilities for how it can unfold. The strand of the democratization literature concerned with the gray zone suggests that the changes under way in the Arab world may lead to various possible destinations that differ *both* from their points of departure and from liberal democracy.

An important preoccupation of democratization scholars, and one with particular relevance to our study, is the question what *causes* polities to become and remain democracies? Despite a huge volume of research in this area, there are few uncontested findings and no overall consensus on causative factors. We did not try to replicate others' efforts to isolate systematically such factors. Rather, our purpose was to examine how factors regarded as important in the democratization literature influenced the outcomes of particular transition processes. We did this so that we could consider how past experience speaks to the processes now unfolding in the Arab world. We did not look at every possible factor, but instead selected ones that were likely to be pertinent in the context of the Arab world. And we selected for close inspection examples of transitions in which these factors were at play, so that we could explore their effects on democratization and ways that challenges might be managed.[4]

The influences we considered include both structural conditions and policy choices. They are: (1) the *mode of regime change*, with attention given to how the way in which power changed hands affected the democratization process; (2) the country's *past experience with political*

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[4] In the study on which this summary is based we examined democratization patterns in each of the following regions and focused in-depth on the cases noted in parentheses: Southern Europe (Portugal, Greece, Spain, Turkey); Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Peru); Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space (Hungary, Poland, Romania, Kyrgyzstan); Asia (the Philippines, Indonesia); and sub-Saharan Africa (Mali, Kenya, Ghana).

pluralism; (3) *critical policy choices* made by the domestic actors during the transition process, including decisions made regarding subordination of militaries to civilian control, elections, constitution making, and transitional justice (meaning the process of holding former regime leaders to account for abuses); (4) *state and social cohesion*, including social cleavages, insurgencies, and unsettled borders; (5) *economic characteristics*, including overall levels of wealth as well as income disparities; (6) the *external environment*; and (7) *external policy choices and assistance*, including efforts by foreign actors to foster democratization. These factors and choices formed the structure for our exploration of past transitions and analysis of the implications for events in the Arab world.

The Arab World on the Eve of Change

On the eve of the Arab Spring, the Arab world remained the sole zone untouched by global democratization trends. There were a variety of regime types in the region, including hybrid regimes (in Lebanon, Kuwait, and Iraq), monarchies, and authoritarian republics, but no consolidated democracies. Scholars and policy practitioners have advanced a variety of theories as well as statistical and comparative analyses to explain this lack of democracy, but no consensus has emerged on which explanations are most persuasive.

One category of theories holds that the Arab world lacks the cultural prerequisites for democracy, such as affinity for participatory government and individual rights. Some argue that either Islam or the tribal origins of Arab society has fostered a culture of submission to authority. Another group of theories looks at what is unique about the location of the Arab world. The presence of oil in the region is one of the most prevalent explanations: Oil revenues accrue to the state, enabling it to reinforce authoritarianism by distributing patronage, buying off potential opponents, and building a coercive apparatus. A third set of theories focuses on the efforts of foreign powers, particularly the United States, to maintain regional stability and protect Israel. Finally, Arab regimes have become adept at staving off pressure for change, for

example, by playing secularists and Islamists against one another and using foreign enemies—real and imagined—to deflect attention from their own weak legitimacy.

Regardless of the best explanation or combination of explanations, it is clear that authoritarianism has proven resilient in the Arab world. The Arab Spring fractured the illusion of regime invulnerability. But the confluence of conditions and authoritarian strategies that blocked political change in the past can be expected to pose challenges for democratization going forward.

From the Arab Winter to the Arab Spring

The self-immolation of street vendor Mohammed al-Bou'azizi in Tunisia set off the wave of protests that led to the fall of President Zine El Abidine Ben 'Ali and catalyzed the Arab Spring. Although some analysts had long questioned the stability of Arab regimes given their reliance on repression, the January 14th Revolution was surprising both in the speed with which it unfolded and in that Tunisia was the first domino to fall. The patronage networks, internal security forces, and democratic façade Ben 'Ali spent 23 years constructing took just 29 days to collapse. Given Tunisia's positive economic performance, large middle class, and secular values, it appeared to be one of the more unlikely candidates in the region for a mass protest movement.

As should have been expected, the Tunisian transition has not been entirely smooth. It had a rocky start that included a delay in holding the country's first free and fair elections and disputes over the limits of the transitional government's authorities. The transition began to find its footing in October 2011 when elections did take place, resulting in the seating of a Constituent Assembly in January 2012. The successful integration of Islamists into the political system and their partnering with secular parties to form a government provided further reason for optimism. But the assassination of the secular activist, Chokri Belaid, in February 2013, introduced new uncertainty into the political process and led to the collapse of the government. Despite the fact that very real political, practical, and economic challenges lay

ahead, this turbulence should not obscure the remarkable shift that has occurred in Tunisia. If democracy deepens in Tunisia, others in the Arab world will have the opportunity to learn from Tunisia's example, including from its approach to incorporating Islamic-oriented political parties into public life.

Less than a month after Tunisia's Ben 'Ali fled into exile, Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak was compelled to step down after 30 years in power. The Egyptian revolution was a whirlwind—just 18 days of massive protests. It quickly became clear that the revolution was the relatively easy part and that a transition to a new political system would be a much longer and more uncertain process.

Egypt's new leaders will need to untangle a complex political system that mixed a veneer of democratic practices, repressive strategies, and a welfare state. The transition process will continue for some time to be strained by poor economic conditions; underdeveloped political and civic organizations, with the exception of Islamic groups; and the revolution's legacy of opportunistic and superficial cohesion.

Thus far, the Egyptian transition has been chaotic and characterized by severe polarization between the country's Islamist groups and their secular rivals. The Islamists have responded to the impasse by taking unilateral actions such as suspending judicial review and pushing through a divisive constitution. And for their part, the secular forces have refused to offer themselves as a governing partner and threatened to withdraw from the electoral process to further isolate the Islamists. With formal politics stalled, street politics returned in a manner that continues to destabilize the country and impede the political transition.

The fraught nature of Egypt's transition also poses risks to the progress that has been made on readjusting the balance between civil and military power. After the interim military rulers turned over power to a freely elected civilian president for the first time in the country's modern history, some secular activists began calling for the return of a security state. In the midst of these political challenges, Egypt has faced a severe currency crisis that has led to inflation, potential devaluation, and the need for foreign assistance that will be contingent on a cutback in state subsidies.

Nevertheless, even if it proceeds slowly, democratization in Tunisia and especially in Egypt—the most populous and potentially the most influential Arab country—could provide pivotal examples for the other Arab countries in transition, as well as for the rest of the region. Despite their challenges, Tunisia and Egypt are better placed to democratize than the other countries currently in the throes of political change.

Libya, Yemen, and (if a regime change occurs) Syria have severe though varying types of internal divisions that could constrain development of democracy, particularly by reinforcing tendencies toward identity politics. Moreover, all three have experienced or are continuing to experience serious violence associated with movements for political change. A post-civil war Syria would be vulnerable to a wave of retribution against regime remnants and supporters, and would likely be consumed with the challenges of government formation, power-sharing, and physical reconstruction. Libya after the ouster of Muammar Qaddafi in October 2011 has faced the special challenge of reconstructing a state virtually from scratch and, not surprisingly, the political transition there has moved very slowly.

Unlike in Egypt and Tunisia where presidents were deposed and ruling parties abolished but the state never collapsed, in Libya there was no functioning bureaucracy to fall back on or a professional military to fill the security vacuum. Instead, Libya faces the daunting challenge of creating security forces from disparate militias and building institutions on the ashes of a highly personalistic regime. These challenges must be solved in a context in which the populace for 42 years was deprived of opportunities for political participation and access to independent information, and was socialized to be suspicious of political parties. To the credit of Libya's transitional leaders—with help from the international community—Libya did succeed in staging a free election marked by high voter turnout in July 2012. But since then, the elected government has failed to make headway on key issues including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of militias, and has not resolved significant security problems, particularly in the east of the country.

In Yemen, the negotiated, phased transition of power that ended former President Ali Abdullah Saleh's 33-year rule in February 2012 defused the protests there. But the relative stability achieved is fragile. The southern independence movement has surged; Sunni-Shiite sectarian tension has risen in the north; and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has mounted a campaign of assassinations. Against this backdrop, a national dialogue process meant to be a centerpiece of the transition has been repeatedly delayed. Moreover, unlike Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, which are part of a sub-region in the Arab world inching toward democratization, Yemen sits at the tip of the Arabian Peninsula in a neighborhood of highly autocratic regimes that have held out against the Arab Spring phenomenon.

Past Democratization Experiences Throughout the World

The third wave of democratization, which bypassed the Arab world, commenced with political transitions in Southern Europe in the mid-1970s. Regime changes in Latin America were set in motion in the 1980s and continued into the 1990s. Next came the stunning transformation of Central and Eastern Europe and dissolution of the Soviet Union beginning in 1989. Democratic transitions swept through sub-Saharan Africa in the early to mid-1990s (though many were not sustained), and occurred more sporadically in various parts of Asia in the 1980s through 2000s. We examined the democratization trends in each of these regions and studied in depth particular examples of transitions in each region.

In Southern Europe, the nearly contemporaneous regime changes in Portugal, Greece, and Spain produced consolidated democracies relatively quickly, while in Turkey progress was more halting. In the Portuguese, Greek, and Spanish cases and, to a lesser extent, later in Turkey, the pull of European integration was an especially important factor propelling democratization.

The courses of these transitions were diverse. Spain experienced a regime-initiated transition that relied on maintaining a high degree of consent and consensus. Portugal had a chaotic transition, in large

part due to political and ideological divisions within the military. In Greece, a weakened military junta disintegrated after only seven years in power, enabling a speedy return to civilian rule.

In Turkey after the 1980 coup, the military supervised a transition from authoritarian rule and then, after ensuring that its own status and influence were strengthened in the constitution, returned to the barracks. A form of guided democracy was established in which the military acted as an unelected arbiter, determining the political rules of the game behind the scenes. That role diminished very gradually, while at the same time Islamist-oriented political parties rose to power.

Latin America saw cyclical patterns of authoritarianism and democratization in the postindependence period. The democratization cycle that unfolded in the 1980s and 1990s reflected strong continent-wide trends toward democratic governance, the free market, and trade liberalization. These trends reinforced each other, strengthened the role of civil society and elected officials, and, in some countries, particularly in the Southern Cone, transformed the political role of the military. In Central America, the change in the global and regional balances of power that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet Union created the conditions for peaceful resolution of conflicts through the disarming of insurgent groups and their incorporation into democratic processes. Together with these changes, democracy became normative in the inter-American system.

These developments were evident in Argentina, for example, where an institutional military government fell after defeat in the Falklands War discredited it. They were evident as well in Chile's evolutionary transition to a more democratic system, which was carried out within the constitutional framework set up by the authoritarian regime. The transition in Peru, however, was an unusual case of regime collapse, primarily due to its own internal contradictions. Because Alberto Fujimori's regime had not set down deep authoritarian roots, the democratic consolidation process after his ouster proceeded quickly and faced few hurdles. In each of these cases, the transitions took their respective courses largely because of domestic political dynamics. External assistance contributed to the conduct of free and fair elections and other

aspects of democratic development but did not appear to significantly affect democratization.

The transitions in Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space resulted in disparate outcomes. For much of the post-Soviet space, especially the Central Asian states, the problems associated with the legacy of Soviet rule weighed heavily against democratization. For the countries of Eastern Europe, the prospect of membership in the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was crucial to the speed, comprehensiveness, and success of the transition processes.

The sharp economic decline experienced by the communist states in Eastern Europe in the late 1970s and early 1980s helped set the stage for regime changes by increasing public discontent and undermining the fragile legitimacy of the regimes. In the postcommunist period, the countries of both Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union were faced with the challenge of creating market economies concurrently with changing their political orders. The dual nature of these transitions is distinct from those that occurred elsewhere or are under way in the Arab world.

One important explanation for differences among the Eastern European transitions is the degree of the former regimes' penetration of society. The regimes that maintained the tightest control and used the harshest methods to repress dissent, such as Romania and Bulgaria, had the most difficult transitions. Few, if any, autonomous groups had been allowed to emerge that could help to broker the transitions. Thus, the transitions in Romania and Bulgaria were chaotic and slower than those in countries such as Hungary and Poland, where civil society had begun to emerge prior to the transition.

Weak civil society has also been an important factor limiting democratization in Central Asia and parts of the European post-Soviet space. Lack of strong national identities and the emergence of violent ethnic conflicts and separatist pressures were key factors as well. In Russia, President Boris Yeltsin's decision to give priority to economic restructuring over democratic state restructuring weakened the state, weakened democracy, and ultimately weakened the economy. These

failings paved the way for Yeltsin's successor, Vladimir Putin, to restore the power of the central state over society and forge a faux democracy.

In Asia, many countries, including North Korea, Laos, Vietnam, and China, have never embarked on a democratic course and remain under varying degrees of authoritarian rule. Many others have hybrid regimes with both autocratic and democratic characteristics. In recent years, though, Freedom House has recorded impressive gains in adoption of institutions of electoral democracy in the region. Among the countries that *have* experienced democratic transitions, the history, patterns, and durability of the transitions are especially diverse.

The limited consolidation of first-generation postcolonial democratic transitions in Asia has often been explained by low levels of economic development, low levels of mass education, inexperience with democratic institutions, and historically hierarchical and authoritarian political cultures. Nevertheless, India's experience shows that democratic consolidation can happen even in the context of widespread poverty and illiteracy and tremendous ethnic diversity. Second-generation democratic transitions in the 1980s and 1990s were more widespread. Although the fall of the Soviet Union and globalization were key factors influencing change in many of the transitions during this period, the specific impetus for and the modes of change varied widely.

For South Korea and Taiwan, for example, democratic transitions occurred in the context of modernization and economic transformation. By the 1980s, each had a growing, educated middle class that increasingly regarded authoritarian, heavy-handed governance as illegitimate. In Mongolia, the only former Soviet Asian country to have undergone successful transition, the main driver of change was the fall of the Soviet Union, which prompted the ruling party to introduce a multiparty democratic system and a new constitution in 1990.

Some second-generation transitions—notably, in South Asia, Bangladesh and Pakistan—failed to produce durable democratic governance. In Southeast Asia, too, the record has been mixed. For example, the Philippine transition after the ouster of President Marcos in 1986 resulted in institutional changes, but did not fundamentally change the Philippine power structure. This case illustrates the potential shallowness of democratization. Meanwhile, democracy in Indo-

nesia has strengthened over time after the end of the 32-year rule of President Suharto in 1998. Indonesia exemplifies evolutionary transition in which changes were effected within the existing constitutional framework. In both the Philippines and Indonesia, the decisions of the senior military leaderships to support changes of government were critical factors favoring democratization.

Sub-Saharan Africa experienced an unprecedented and fastmoving series of democratic transitions in 1990–1994. These events have been referred to as the "second independence," acknowledging that the democratic record of most postindependence regimes left much to be desired. Although a few transitions happened earlier, some durable and some short-lived, they were exceptions on a continent where the typical regime was authoritarian, relied on single-party rule, and kept civil liberties under tight control.

The changes of the 1990s have been attributed in part to the fall of the Soviet Union, which helped discredit one-party systems and, more importantly, removed Cold War politics from Africa. Another factor was the continent's debt crisis, which, along with a worldwide decline in commodity prices, eroded already limited revenues. A third factor was the emergence of private actors who pressed for multiparty systems, civil liberties, and democracy and were able to seize opportunities when external circumstances turned in their favor. Public opinion in the region created new pressures as well, as expectations of government performance rose and the public's readiness to challenge abuses of power grew.

Democratization in sub-Saharan Africa has, however, been fragile. Only a few countries experienced significant progress toward democratic consolidation. In many places democratic transitions were short-lived or delivered less change than promised. Some incumbents quickly learned how to manipulate the political process to ensure they would be elected, as in Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire. Others were replaced by members of the opposition who proved no less prone to authoritarian tendencies than their predecessors, as in Zambia. Unlike some of the more successful cases, in these countries there was no fundamental restructuring of political processes and institutions. Mali provides an especially unfortunate example of fragility. After two decades of demo-

cratic development, despite being one of the world's poorest countries, a coup toppled the government in early 2012.

Experience in sub-Saharan Africa demonstrates that poverty, other unfavorable structural conditions, and histories of conflict can be surmounted in the effort to build democracies. Sub-Saharan African states have more political contestation after the third wave than at any time in their postindependence histories, even if democracy in the region continues to be weakened by corruption and illiberalism. Importantly for transitional states in the Arab world, however, sub-Saharan Africa's experience also shows that democratic consolidation can be elusive. Democratization in unfavorable circumstances is a slow process, with many ongoing challenges.

Globally, democratization momentum slowed in the first decade of the 2000s, with a variety of hybrid regime types emerging, that is, regimes that combined autocratic practices and democratic forms. Some observers of democratization wondered whether the trend toward more and more democracy around the world was stalled or even reversing. As of the end of 2012, Freedom House observed seven straight years of more countries with declining democracy scores than improving ones. Although there were no longer any widely recognized alternatives to democracy in terms of expressed ideologies, there was, in reality, a large number of illiberal democracies, or hybrid regimes. That said, regression to authoritarianism has generally not occurred among states that truly transitioned to democracy during the third wave.

It is too soon to tell whether the developments of the present century to date represent a turn in the trend-line away from ever-greater democratic advances or an historical blip. It is also too early to tell where the political changes that began in 2011 in the Arab world will lead. But unquestionably, democracy has advanced far both normatively and practically since the mid-1970s on a global basis as well as within most regions.

Lessons and Policy Implications

Our conclusions begin with a broad comparison of the Arab Spring to key features of third wave transitions. We then identify lessons from past experience that speak to the critical challenges ahead for Arab countries undergoing political change. Finally, we highlight implications for policymaking in support of democratization on the part of the international community. Overall, these conclusions will help policymakers assess the challenges ahead, form well-founded expectations, shape diplomatic approaches, and take practical steps toward positive change.

The Arab Spring Compared to Third Wave Transitions

A fundamental historical shift in recent decades is that democracy no longer has any serious competitors as a legitimate system of governance. Particularly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the rejection of communism as a form of government across Europe, governments in all countries transitioning from authoritarianism espouse democracy, even though many fall short in practice. No governments, even those that purposefully bolster autocrats beyond their borders, now openly propose any transplantable alternative to democracy. Institutions in the international system promote democracy as a universal norm.

An important question about the consequences of the Arab Spring is whether the Arab world will adapt to this reality or change it. A distinct feature of Arab political culture is that some propose an alternative to democracy: Islamism. Uncertain as yet is what difference this distinction will make to the outcomes of transitions in the region.

Developments in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, and potentially elsewhere will test the ability of parties that champion an Islamist agenda to pursue political and social aims within a democratic system alongside parties with a secular orientation. They will also test the ability of transitional leaders to manage the cleavage between Islamist and secular conceptions of the state. This challenge will be particularly acute where Islamists participated in armed uprisings against the state. For example, should the opposition depose the Assad regime in Syria, it will have to contend not only with integrating Islamists into the politi-

cal process but also with demobilizing Islamist militias that took up arms against the regime.

Arab countries may follow paths similar to those taken by Turkey and Indonesia, where socially conservative Muslim parties play active roles in electoral politics within democratic systems. They could experience something like Iraq's fractious identity-based politics, where sectarian affiliation plays a strong role but where the prospect of an Islamist system is dim. In some countries, however, the turn away from authoritarianism could open up space for groups to promote Islamist forms of government. Even after the post-uprising electoral victories of Islamist parties in Egypt and Tunisia (but not in Libya), the enduring parameters of political Islam in Arab countries undergoing political change have yet to be defined.

Popular expectations and continued street pressure will be more important to the outcomes of the Arab Spring than in some previous transitions. In Egypt, for example, protesters early on saw a need to press the military to maintain momentum toward democracy, and later mobilized to hold the ruling Freedom and Justice Party to its democratic promises. Transitions in Southern Europe, Latin America, and Eastern Europe were generally sustained by elite consensus, developed before the transition's opening or in its early stages, with less need for populations to hold their leaders' feet to the fire. As a result of the important role of mass protest in initiating the Arab Spring transitions and, in all likelihood, pushing the processes forward, some of these transitions, especially in Tunisia, might move more quickly than those that were initiated from above, as in Latin America. But, in the absence of elite and intergroup consensus, the transitions in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and, if a transition opens there, Syria could remain contested for protracted periods of time.

To date, the Arab Spring has spawned more protest movements than completed regime changes. Nevertheless, the examples of contemporaneous region-wide transitions during the third wave, especially in Eastern Europe, beg comparison with events in the Arab world. Is democracy contagious in ways that suggest more Arab regime changes are to come? Protests in Tunisia inspired protests in Egypt, and inspiration then snowballed through the region. But experience elsewhere sug-

gests that these so-called demonstration effects, that is, events in one country showing people in other countries the possibility of change, are more powerful in sparking transformational dynamics than in sustaining them through to completed transition.

The wave of change that swept through Eastern Europe after 1989 occurred under much more favorable internal and external conditions than the changes occurring in Arab countries. The removal of Soviet support uniformly undermined the survival of authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe, and European integration bolstered the democratization dynamics (transitions in the former Soviet Union, where European integration is not a factor, have been much more troubled). Arab regimes have been more diverse than regimes in Eastern Europe were, including with respect to their internal and external support structures. Regimes in Syria and Yemen, for example, have mixed personalist and single-party rule and have been supported, especially in Syria's case, by a strong internal security architecture. In Bahrain, Saudi Arabia (the Gulf area's main power) has supported the monarchy out of shared interest in preventing democratic reform. Although the Arab Spring has generated pressure for political change, counterpressures in the region remain strong.

That said, diffusion effects do not have to be manifested in spectacular and speedy political change. In Latin America, the entrenchment of democratic norms and practices took place over a longer period of time than in Eastern or Southern Europe. Moreover, studies have shown that having democratic neighbors on average increases the likelihood of a country becoming a democracy. So, if Egypt and Tunisia eventually consolidate the democratic gains they have already made, and if Libya and Yemen continue to democratize (though probably more slowly), and if even Iraq better manages its sectarian divisions and gradually democratizes—all of which are possible developments— changes such as those could improve the democratization prospects for the rest of the region over the longer term. Unlike the relatively more uniform process in Eastern Europe, diffusion effects in the Arab world, barring any major reversals, are likely to play out progressively over time and in different ways in different countries.

A cautionary lesson can be drawn from the wave of political transitions that in the early to mid-1990s swept through sub-Saharan Africa, a region with nearly as little prior democratic experience as the Arab world. Though overall less tumultuous than the revolutions of the Arab Spring, these transitions occurred relatively quickly and many involved public protests. After the initial swell of change, many of these transitions failed to deliver enduring democratization. Fundamental restructuring of political processes and institutions, including through constitutional reform, was crucial in the more successful cases. Where such restructuring did not occur, newly elected regimes often practiced old forms of repression or manipulated democratic formalities to their benefit.

Lessons for Egypt and Tunisia

Based on our analysis of past regime transitions throughout the world and considering the particular challenges ahead for Egypt and Tunisia, we describe below lessons that speak to those challenges. Many of these lessons will likely apply to other contexts as well, but our comparative analysis focused most closely on these two countries, where autocratic regimes had already been toppled when we started our study.

Managing Effects of the Mode of Regime Change

A fundamental challenge facing Egypt is the need to reconcile the wave of optimism the revolution unleashed with the reality of extreme political polarization. The January 25th Revolution engendered a moment of national unity in that many Egyptians agreed on the need for political change. But after the removal of Mubarak and the ruling party, transitional leaders have struggled to build consensus on the contours of the new political order. Islamist and secular forces have remained at loggerheads, with the secularists boycotting key events in the transition, such as the writing of a permanent constitution, rather than legitimizing a process they saw as dominated by a single ideological perspective. Even in Tunisia, where Islamists and secular parties were able to form a unity government, Tunisians are increasingly pessimistic about the direction of the country.

In past transitions, modes of regime change—including revolutionary, coup-initiated, negotiated, and gradual reform—and their effects were extremely varied. Few cases of successful democratization escaped turbulence of differing dimensions, indicating that *turbulence alone does not derail democratization. The difficulty of managing high popular expectations after regime change was not a prominent factor* in the reversals or especially slow transitions; failure to reform institutions, leaders' insufficient commitment to democratization, and other internal political dynamics were the more powerful explanations.

The Southern European cases show that *outcomes can hinge on whether the regime change involved rejection of the former political system, and not just rejection of the former regime.* In Spain and Portugal particularly, the dismantling of discredited institutions was essential to democratization. This is likely to be so for Tunisia as well, where the ruling party had spread its tentacles throughout the state. And in Egypt, there is still nostalgia in some quarters for a security state led by the military. To see this, one need look no further than the June 2012 presidential election in which Ahmed Shafiq, an Air Force commander who served under Mubarak and was the last Prime Minister appointed by him, nearly won the presidency by promising stability and a strong hand.

In Turkey, the authoritarian Kemalist system, with its strong military influence, was eased toward full democracy only gradually. As the preferences of the majority of Turks increasingly were able to hold sway, the Islamist-oriented Justice and Development Party rose to power. In Chile, too, democracy developed gradually; authoritarian "enclaves" in the constitution (including protections for the military) were not fully removed until 25 years after the transition was launched. As in Turkey, the transition process was regime-led. This type of *gradualism will be difficult for Egypt's new rulers to emulate*, however, because of the bottom-up, revolutionary initiation of Egypt's transition and high expectations of rapid change.

The political changes that occurred after 1989 throughout Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space were uniformly triggered by the withdrawal of Soviet support for satellite regimes and ultimately the demise of the Soviet Union. But outcomes were distinctly different

between the two parts of the former communist bloc, with far greater democratic gains in Eastern Europe. A key distinction is that in all the Eastern European cases, the former system, together with its supporting institutions, was thoroughly rejected. Instead of systemic change, the post-Soviet space saw so-called imitation democracies take hold, as well as some instances of continuing authoritarianism. *Real democracy will not take hold in the Arab world without systemic change*, whether rapid, as in Eastern Europe, or gradual, as in Turkey and Chile.

Romania's conditions before the regime change share some features with those in Tunisia and Libya. Nicolae Ceausescu's especially repressive rule permitted no development of political institutions or civil society groups that could broker a transition. With an inchoate opposition in Romania, the transition process was prolonged and disorderly. Nevertheless, Romania successfully democratized, showing that *tumult during a transition does not doom democratic progress, where there are sufficient countervailing forces to keep democratization on track*. Tunisia has some advantages in this regard: trade and tourism ties to Western Europe, a considerable middle class that could benefit from reforms, and a relatively high level of socioeconomic development.

Mongolia's experience should persuade policymakers to *remain open-minded about the prospects for democratization in the Arab world*. Mongolia experienced one of the most surprising, though still potentially vulnerable, democratic transitions of the third wave. The country is poor, has no previous democratic experience, has no genuinely democratic neighbors, is geographically isolated from other democracies, and suffered painful economic hardships during the transition process. Sound leadership and broad-based commitment to embracing democratic processes were crucial to transition success. In short order, Mongolia had several free and fair elections with alternations in power.

Similarly, Mali illustrates the possibility of planting democracy in poor soil, showing that *difficult conditions are not deterministic*. Despite being extremely poor, having no previous democratic experience, and dealing with a separatist movement, in 2011 Mali was one of only nine sub-Saharan African countries that Freedom House rated "free." Two factors crucial to Mali's success were the lack of an incumbent and the leadership exercised by the military officer who led a coup and then

promptly transferred power to a civilian-military transitional government. But Mali also illustrates that democracy planted in poor soil can be uprooted. After a 20-year process of consolidation of democracy, Mali experienced a military coup in March 2012 and then a surge of instability; circumstances there remained highly unsettled as of the date of this publication. A key factor provoking the coup was insecurity exacerbated by an influx of armed insurgents who left Libya as the Qaddafi regime crumbled.

Open-mindedness as to transition outcomes should be tempered with a realistic appreciation of the challenges ahead: *revolutionary regime changes do not necessarily lead to transformational changes*. In the Philippines, the transition restored democratic institutions and processes, but politics then defaulted to the pre-martial law pattern of chronic instability. Patterns of political behavior in the Philippines were well entrenched. Countries entering new political territory, such as Mongolia and Mali, may in this sense have an advantage, as, likewise, may Arab countries that are establishing democratic processes for the first time.

Conversely, a *transition process that emphasizes continuity can still produce deep political change* where continuity has sufficiently broad support. In Indonesia, the transition process maintained continuity of government, but institutional reforms nonetheless were set in motion and a high level of democracy was rapidly achieved. Religiously oriented parties entered politics, but militant Islamists have regularly received only small percentages of the vote. The broad similarities between the power structures (especially the political role of the military) and some social conditions in Indonesia and some Arab countries suggest the *potential for stable evolution of Arab democracies where new political groups are broadly included in the democratic process* and powerful institutions maintain consistent support for democratization.

Overcoming Lack of Democratic Experience

Egypt would seem to have had the advantage of having experienced a hybrid, rather than thoroughly autocratic, regime type before the uprising. Egyptians had some limited acquaintance with democratic processes and civil society organization on which to build. Tunisia, on the other hand, is transitioning from a strongly authoritarian regime,

even by regional standards. Tunisian society was effectively depoliticized by a half century of tight political control and a system that relied on economic performance to legitimate its rule. Tunisia would seem to face a considerable uphill climb in building the institutional foundations for democracy. Nevertheless, as of early 2013, Tunisia's relative disadvantages have not prevented it from achieving more democratic progress and a smoother transition than Egypt. Perhaps the greatest risk to democratization in Tunisia is the possibility that ineffective democratic governance will cause disenchanted Tunisians, who are accustomed to relative material comfort, to be amenable to a return of so-called legitimacy by results.

Though building democratic structures and processes where few or none have existed is difficult, *past experience with political pluralism was of no particular benefit* to transition outcomes in the third wave cases we explored. In some cases, the presence of a foundation for civil society to be able to play a role in the transition was important, however. Among the countries we focused on that successfully democratized, some had prior experience with political pluralism, some had limited experience, and some had none at all.

In countries such as Hungary and Poland, civil society and independent groups had begun to develop well before the transitions commenced and were able to play important roles in negotiating the transitions. Similarly, strong civil society institutions that operated within limits under authoritarian rule in Indonesia and the Philippines were critical to the regime changes and to the persistence of broad support for democratization. Egypt, which shares this advantage, may thus be better positioned for democratization than Arab countries such as Libya, where space for civil society was entirely closed—so long as newly-empowered institutions, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and long-empowered institutions, such as the military, continue to support democratization, as militaries ultimately did in both Indonesia and the Philippines.

Establishing Democratic Control of Security Institutions

The critical policy choices that will determine the extent of democratization in Arab countries in transition will include those related to

security institution reform. In Egypt and Tunisia, reforms that bind the forces under control of the ministries of interior and defense to rule of law and respect for human rights will be especially important given their past conduct. While the military in Egypt has formally handed over power to a civilian leader, many of its perks and privileges remain in place and the institution continues to operate in a manner Egyptians sometimes refer to as "a state above a state." Thus, ensuring the military's support for democratization, despite its strong institutional interests in maintaining its political influence and lucrative business enterprises, is likely to be a vexing challenge. In Tunisia, the Ben 'Ali regime used a sprawling internal security apparatus, embedded at all levels of society, to maintain control of politics and the population. Dismantling this apparatus and subordinating legitimate internal security institutions to democratic control will be a crucial element of democratization there.

Militaries in many countries played crucial roles in facilitating or directly carrying out regime changes. But in some countries, even where militaries enabled civilian oppositionists to come to power rather than taking control themselves, a difficult struggle to subordinate the military to democratic civilian control ensued. *Militaries have sometimes been effective stewards of democratization, but eventually need to be brought under civilian control for democracy to be consolidated.*

Some militaries returned to barracks on their own initiative after participating in regime change. In other cases, civilian leaders had to engage in negotiation or conciliation and offer to the military special privileges and protections to win their acquiescence to a new democratic order. Some civilian leaders had to purge the officer corps of former regime loyalists to ensure such acquiescence. *Where militaries have been discredited due to their conduct during the former regime or where they are riven by internal conflicts, civilian leaders generally found it easier to push them out of politics.* Some countries, such as Chile and Turkey, pursued a gradual approach to shifting the balance of power from military to civilian authorities, while others changed the balance more rapidly.

Subordinating the military to civilian control has been a challenge both in cases in which the military was and was not a signifi-

cant player in the transition process, as indicated by coup attempts and other attempted subversions of civilian authority during transitions in Argentina, Greece, the Philippines, and elsewhere. Spain faced a military coup attempt and Peru's government faced down a mutiny a few years after the transitions in each country, even though their militaries were not key actors in the regime changes. This suggests that *firmly establishing civilian control should be a policy priority for governments in transition countries even where the military has not played an important political role* in the transition.

Where the danger of backlash is great, *conciliatory measures can be used to mitigate the risk of coups and, more generally, to socialize the military to a democratic order.* In Argentina, the new civilian government felt compelled to move carefully in pursuing accountability for "dirty war" crimes; it responded to military revolts by negotiating with rebel officers and compromising on questions of prosecutions and salary increases. In the Philippines, the military's support for the opposition in the political crisis that led to Ferdinand Marcos's ouster did not translate automatically into support for the civilian government that followed. The military was not fully socialized to democracy until years after the "people power" revolution.

In Greece, however, a foiled coup attempt handed the government an opportunity to move decisively against former junta sympathizers by forcibly retiring 200 officers. The calculation of when to rebalance civil–military power relationships is difficult and must respect the particular dynamics in each case. External pressure for such rebalancing should be sensitive to these dynamics.

Bringing internal security services under democratic control poses a different type of challenge. *New leaders should dismantle internal security organs if they were pillars of support for the former regime.* Such efforts are complicated by the considerable extent to which such organs, unlike militaries, may have spread their structures and influence throughout society. Ensuring that internal security organs provide legitimate public protection services rather than operate as tools of regime control is part of the broader set of institutional reform imperatives essential to democratizing governance.

In Tunisia, the interim authorities disbanded the so-called political police, and in Egypt the State Security Directorate was dissolved. Although these bodies may have been the most egregious in their abuse of authority, the broader police forces also were implicated and will require significant reform.

Conducting Initial Democratic Elections

Decisions on the timing and openness of initial elections are often among the most contentious in the early part of a transition. Early criticisms that the Egyptian military was moving so quickly toward elections that new political forces would not have time to organize were soon replaced by criticisms that the military was moving too slowly. When elections occurred or were scheduled to occur, the Egyptian judiciary then played an activist role in overturning their results or delaying the vote. Tunisia moved rapidly to elect (in October 2011) a Constituent Assembly charged with drafting a new constitution. Preparations for the election were contentious, but, in the event, the elections proceeded smoothly. Libya held a successful election for a Constituent Assembly in July 2012, although the body that emerged from it has operated more like a traditional parliament and has been characterized by general dysfunction.

Inclusive approaches to elections after regime change helped to ensure smooth transitions, even where decisions to open the political playing field seemed risky at the time. In none of our examples did inclusion of formerly banned parties (as in Greece and Spain) or of Islamist parties (as in Indonesia) set back democratization or otherwise destabilize the transition process.

Our cases showed *no correlation between the timing of first elections and the success of democratic transitions.* The underlying political dynamics and the commitment of transition leaders to a fair process were more important in shaping the course of the transition. That said, in some circumstances, adequate technical preparation for elections can be time-consuming where a pre-existing basis is lacking for establishing districts or determining who is entitled to vote. As important as initial elections may be in signaling and effectuating real change, our case studies also revealed that *flawed elections do not necessarily doom*

a democratization process. In Ghana, for instance, elections that were not free and fair in 1992 (after the 1991 transition opening) did not preclude subsequent, gradual democratization and later free and fair elections.

Making a New Constitution

Another critical policy choice is whether and how to create and adopt a new constitution. For Arab countries that have experienced regime change, constitution making provides an unparalleled early opportunity for developing broad consensus on a vision of the nature of the state and its relationship to the people. In Egypt, the first constituent assembly was dissolved by the judiciary and its replacement was boycotted by secular liberal factions. Despite this highly divisive process, the Islamist dominated assembly went ahead with drafting a constitution that passed in a referendum in December 2012. What was intended to be a consensual process degraded into straight majoritarianism, and public distaste was evident in the fact that only a third of eligible voters turned out to cast ballots in the referendum. More than two years after the uprising in Tunisia, constitutional drafters there are still in the midst of crafting their charter.

Past experiences illustrate that putting in place a new constitution, or amending an existing one, is important to laying a foundation for democratic governance and enshrining protection of civil liberties, human rights, and other valued norms. But also, for immediate practical purposes, *constitution making can be used to foster successful democratization by consolidating consensus and keeping potential spoilers on board.* In Spain, for instance, the constitution-making process was used as a tool to reinforce the consensual approach to the transition. In Argentina, constitutional changes were agreed to ensure the commitment of potential political spoilers to the transition.

A constitution-making process can only serve this consensus-building purpose when care is taken to ensure that the procedures to be used have broad support and when the process is not rushed. In many circumstances, interim constitutional arrangements can remain in place for an extended period of time with no ill effects.

Accounting for Past Injustices

The controversies that swirled around early postrevolution trials of Mubarak, his sons, and senior former Egyptian regime officials show the potential that policy decisions regarding accountability for past injustices have for creating friction in the transition process. Decisions regarding how to continue handling questions of accountability will pose important political tests for the Egyptian leadership and important institutional tests for the Egyptian judiciary. Already in Egypt, the public's dissatisfaction with the pace and outcomes of the trials of former regime officials led President Mohamed Mursi to intervene. In a November 2012 presidential decree that also immunized the president's decisions from judicial review, Mursi appointed a new prosecutor general to appease calls for greater accountability of the prior regime. The move was welcomed in some quarters but further alienated the president from his critics, who saw this as another step in his consolidation of power.

Like Egypt, Tunisia moved very quickly to put its former leader, his family members, and some other officials on trial. The prosecutions, at least in their early stages, were emblematic of the broader lack of order and coherence in the early period of the transition, and their shortcomings exacerbated the poor regard Tunisians have for their judiciary. Tunisia also faces the challenge of uprooting the former ruling party from what was essentially a single-party state. Fully purging the party rank and file would leave Tunisia bereft of experienced public administrators and would exclude a large swath of the population from public life. As of early 2013, the Constituent Assembly was currently debating a draft law that would suspend the political rights of former regime leaders for a limited period of time.

In Libya, the General National Congress in early 2013 was in the midst of drafting its own "political isolation" law that would be applied to holdovers from the prior regime. Libya's draft law has proven particularly contentious because proponents of far-reaching provisions appear to be targeting Mahmoud Jibril, the leader of the largest political bloc in Libya, the National Forces Alliance, who reconciled with the Qaddafi regime during its limited political opening of the midand late 2000s. Thus, rather than establishing objective criteria for political

exclusion, some lawmakers are searching for specific criteria that apply to their political rivals.

During past transitions where public demands for accountability were high, and where the political costs were perceived to be low or there was potential political gain, governments often took measures to hold prior regime officials to account for abuses. These measures, often referred to as transitional justice, have variously included prosecutions, purges, reparations, and truth-telling or historical recording processes. They are often characterized as contributing to reconciliation, though that concept is ill-defined and there is little evidence that such measures have reconciliatory effects. In some circumstances, countries have been exposed to foreign pressure to pursue accountability.

The way in which a postauthoritarian government handles accountability issues tends to reflect the character of a transition. The negotiated nature of the Spanish transition, for example, produced a consensual decision to abstain from opening up the past. The strong break with the past and the initial chaos that characterized the Portuguese transition was reflected in an ambitious and sometimes arbitrary accountability process, which involved expulsions from the country, prosecutions, and massive purges in the public and private sectors. When the Portuguese transition settled into a more stable phase, reconciliation became the dominant official approach. In the Philippines, the lack of effort to pursue accountability for abuses that took place during the Marcos era is emblematic of the shallowness of change in political life. Former Marcos loyalists remained in politics, including in high-level positions, and his wife and son eventually won elected office.

In some Latin American countries, accountability was initially denied due to concerns that exposing crimes committed under military regimes would destabilize and potentially subvert transitions to democracy. In most Central and Eastern European countries there has been little effort to hold former communist officials accountable for abuses during their time in power. *The risk that accountability is thought to pose for stability is rarely tested* because, where this risk is a concern, caution is usually exercised or political unwillingness prevails. But transitional justice delayed or forgone has not undermined democratic transitions;

indeed, many of the most successful transitions were among the most restrained in this regard.

The lack of examples of risks taken that proved unwise makes it difficult to assess the genuineness of the risk. In cases such as Argentina and Chile, however, the concern seems to have been justified: military governments were responsible for the abuses, the military's commitment to democratization was crucial in these top-down transition processes, and groups within the militaries had the capability to derail the processes. Thus, *delaying accountability is warranted when the targets and their sympathizers would have an interest in and the capability to subvert the transition*. Accountability remained an issue of intense public interest in Argentina and Chile, and, ultimately, decades later, as democracy was consolidated, prosecutions and other accountability measures were pursued.

In Egypt, the military was the key pillar of the regime, but the regime on its face was civilianized, and the abuses of greatest public concern were not associated directly with military actions. Thus, although the military's commitment to a democratic transition is crucial in Egypt, efforts to hold Mubarak and others accountable may not pose important risks as long as the net is not cast too widely; the merits of delay are less compelling than in Argentina and Chile. Moreover, *given the revolutionary nature of the regime changes in both Egypt and Tunisia, the new political forces can gain by seeming to meet public demands for accountability*.

Managing State and Social Cohesion Problems

Sectarian strife between Egypt's Muslims and Coptic Christians emerged as an important threat to stability in the early period after the revolution. Numerous clashes broke out that led to the destruction of churches, loss of life, and increasing polarization between the two communities. In Tunisia, cohesion problems relate principally to the political sphere, in which moderate Islamist and secularist visions of governance are competing in the more open postrevolution environment. Another challenge for Tunisia is addressing perceived inequities between the interior of the country and the more well-to-do and politically influential coastal areas. Addressing regional inequities would go

a long way toward stabilizing the transition process and delivering on the promise of the revolution.

The cohesion problem is more pronounced in Libya and Yemen, where many favor decentralization that would grant local autonomy. In Libya, the federalist movement was dealt a significant blow by the July 2012 elections. Those that favored a division of the country called for a boycott, a move that failed when a surprising 60 percent of the electorate turned out. But many in the east and the south still prefer a decentralized arrangement rather than remaining under the thumb of Tripolitania. In Yemen, the southern secessionist movement remains vigorous. Identity politics is also raw in the north, where a religious minority group has resisted control from Sana'a.

Experiences elsewhere in the world suggest that *the threat to democratization that state and social cohesion problems pose comes less from the problems themselves than from how governments respond to them*. Sectarian and ethnic divisions, irredentism and other threats to territorial integrity, and insurgencies test a government's capacity and commitment to respond in ways that are consistent with democratic decision-making, civilian control over security institutions, and human rights and other norms associated with democracy. Instead of aligning with democratic practices, responses to cohesion problems could manifest or reinforce weaknesses in democracy.

Indonesia provides a positive example of how to manage these problems. The government faced separatist insurgencies; violence against the relatively prosperous ethnic Chinese; and large-scale violence between Muslim and Christian communities, which radical Islamist organizations then used to mobilize supporters. The government responded with a combination of negotiation and deployment of military and police forces to the conflict areas. It brokered agreements between Muslim and Christian communities, and (after the 2004 tsunami) reached an agreement with the separatist movement in Aceh that gave the province substantial autonomy.

The Turkish example, on the other hand, shows how a government's responses to cohesion problems can weaken, or reflect weaknesses in, democracy. The Turkish government has in the past responded to Kurdish nationalism, expressed both through violence and political struggle,

with repressive measures directed at a segment of its own population and with resistance to cultural and political autonomy for the Kurdish areas.

Turkey, like Tunisia and in some respects Egypt, also lacks a widely shared vision of the state and deep-seated social polarization. The country remains divided between Western coastal and urban middle class citizens, who support a secularist vision of the state, and large majorities in the Central and Eastern provinces and the urban lower middle-class, who support the ascendant socially conservative policies favored by the Justice and Development Party. Democratization brought this polarization to the surface of politics by enabling parties that reflect majority views to wield new influence. The problem in Turkey requires continuing efforts to find ways to accommodate divergent interests and suggests that the difficulty Arab countries may have in resolving similar problems could slow the transition processes. *Lack of consensus on the nature of the state can pose an obstacle in constitutional negotiations, law reform, establishment of new governance structures, and setting of policy priorities.*

Confronting Economic Problems

Economic grievances, especially widespread perceptions of inequalities, were one driver of the revolution in Egypt. The regime's legitimacy had been based on a social contract that included extensive state employment, food subsidies, and considerable social welfare spending. The revolution and the political instability that has followed have exacerbated Egypt's economic challenges, thus making the need to manage the public's expectations of economic improvement even more compelling. Tunisia, on the other hand, was considered a model of economic reform in the region under the former regime and experienced impressive economic growth. But its performance masked serious problems, including high unemployment among university-educated youth, wide regional disparities in living standards, and growing personal indebtedness among the middle class. Tunisians expect new leaders to address these difficult issues.

In many countries that experienced political transitions, deterioration of economic conditions and consequent public discontent played a role in precipitating the transition. These include Eastern European

countries, in which poor economic performance undermined the fragile legitimacy of authoritarian regimes. In Indonesia, severe economic hardship that resulted from the 1997 Asian financial crisis triggered popular unrest, contributing to Suharto's fall. Many countries in sub-Saharan Africa suffered economic stress in the early 1990s, leading to public protests and some regime changes.

In the aftermath of regime changes, however, *failure to improve living standards did not cause democratization to fail*. Some studies have shown that recessionary crises can trigger democratic reversals in poorer countries, but avoiding that type of crisis is not the same as failing to meet popular expectations of economic improvement. Mongolia experienced painful economic hardships during what was nonetheless a successful transition. Spain suffered sharp economic deterioration after regime change, but democratization proceeded with strong public support. In Argentina, a dire economic situation at the time of regime change required the new civilian government to adopt an austerity program; strong public backlash led to the president's early resignation but did not derail the transition. Elsewhere in Latin America, however, discontent over persistent economic inequality helped bring semi-authoritarian populist movements to power (in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador). On the whole, though, these experiences suggest that economic problems, however vexing for government leaders, are not determinative of the course of democratization.

That said, *economic improvements can help consolidate democracy*. Multiple studies show that democracy can be introduced at any level of economic development, but that higher levels of development ensure that democracy will endure. The reasons why that is so are disputed. Even so, it is apparent that economic improvement and democratization sometimes go hand-in-hand. The Indonesian economy, for instance, steadily strengthened after Suharto's ouster, thus bolstering the democratic transition.

Transitions in the Arab world could be especially fragile and could be more vulnerable to economic strains than many past cases. The potential impact of economic factors must be considered in conjunction with other dynamics. Given the regional environment, including strong resistance to democratization among many Arab

leaders and lack of an attractive pole such as the EU, the circumstances seem less favorable for successful transition than in the European cases or the top-down Latin American ones. Moreover, because Islamism is seen by some in the Arab world as an ideological rival to liberal democracy, a crucial question will be whether economic frustrations or other disappointments with the fruits of revolution will enhance the attractiveness of the Islamist alternative. Much is likely to depend on the examples to be set in Egypt and Tunisia, where Islamist parties have already succeeded electorally, but with most leaders so far promising a moderate course.

Responding to the External Environment

For both Egypt and Tunisia, internal social and political dynamics drove the revolutions, with Tunisia's revolution providing a spark for Egypt's by demonstrating that an apparently strong and entrenched regime actually was fragile. Going forward, strong international, particularly U.S., interest in Egypt's stability due to the country's strategic location, in its foreign policy toward Israel, and in how it exercises its influence throughout the Arab world could be at odds with support for full democratization and acceptance of the populist pressures that could be ushered in. But the degree of leverage the United States especially will have to influence decisions and events in Egypt is likely to be much reduced compared to the Mubarak era. Tunisia, as a small and geopolitically less significant country, will probably escape intense external scrutiny and pressures.

As in Egypt and Tunisia, *internal dynamics were the principal drivers of regime changes in most countries that underwent political transitions, even where external events provided the trigger.* The countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are the major exceptions; once the possibility of change became manifest (when Gorbachev showed his willingness to tolerate a noncommunist government in Poland), all of the regimes became vulnerable.

Being one among neighbors undergoing political changes simultaneously helps to launch transitions, but not necessarily to consolidate democracy. Other external factors were consequential in some cases, however. Once transitions were initiated in Southern and Eastern Europe, the

prospect of integration into European institutions was a powerful force that helped the changes stick. The integration processes provided both incentives for painful political and economic reforms and channels for practical assistance, as well as yardsticks for measuring progress toward democracy. Even in Turkey, the desire to qualify for EU membership has contributed significantly to democratization.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the wave of transitions to multiparty elections in the early 1990s did not lead to consolidated democracies in most of the countries concerned. After the Cold War, Western donors felt freer to apply pressure for democratization in the region, but this was not enough to overcome countervailing internal political factors. In Latin America, democracy became normative in the region during the 1980s and 1990s, in part through mechanisms of the Organization of American States (OAS). But the OAS lacks the ability either to enforce such norms or provide tangible incentives to adhere to them. Peer pressures from neighboring states rapidly deflated a coup attempt in Paraguay in 1996, but more recent democratic erosion in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador illustrates that norms do not have the same power to lock in democratic patterns as political and economic integration has been shown to have in Europe.

Although being in a democratic neighborhood may help countries move toward democracy, being in a nondemocratic neighborhood does not necessarily imperil political change. In Asia, the nature of regimes is diverse, and some countries have remained democratic over long periods of time even without regional democratic norms or integrative structures. The Philippines, for example, has experienced long periods of democracy, and South Korea has been a democracy since 1987. Mongolia democratized in a distinctly undemocratic neighborhood. Thus, *the success of democratization in any single Arab state does not depend on the success of the Arab Spring more broadly.*

Broader Lessons for Democratization in the Arab World

Widening the lens beyond Egypt and Tunisia and beyond the specific categories of challenges discussed above, we identify several broad lessons from past transition experiences. We also briefly assess the implications of our conclusions for transitions that were newly under way or on the horizon at the time we concluded our study.

Broad Lessons from Past Experiences

Past transition experiences exhibit significant variation along multiple dimensions. Thus, it is important to bear in mind that *particular factors that tend to contribute to or to undermine democratization rarely if ever determine outcomes.*

Leadership and, more broadly, *elite commitment to change* emerged as a crucial factor in democratization. Decisions that people in power make can be determinative of democratization; internal circumstances and external pressure or assistance, by affecting incentives or the range of options available, can make those decisions easier or harder.

European integration offered unmatchable incentives and support for successful democratization in Southern and Eastern Europe. The NATO accession process was useful in this regard as well. No other region in the foreseeable future is likely to have such advantages in consolidating democracy. Assistance and pressure of a realistic scale for countries of the Arab world are likely to be easily outweighed by internal considerations.

Decisions regarding *whether to balance change with elements of continuity* and, if so, how much continuity to incorporate were critical in shaping the course of transitions. In Chile, opposition leaders decided to accept a significant degree of continuity throughout a long, gradual transition to democracy. This ensured a slow pace, but a peaceful and successful process. In Spain, reformers in the regime chose to use existing legal and constitutional structures to change the nature of the political system in order to defuse opposition from supporters of the old regime and avoid a legal and political vacuum. In other cases, notably in Eastern Europe, the prior system was so discredited that incorporating elements of political continuity was out of the question, though institutions of the old regime were used to formalize early steps toward democracy in some cases.

Our case studies bear out scholars' findings that no threshold of economic development is required for democratization. Because a country's policy implementation capabilities and the resilience of its state institutions are generally related to its level of economic development (that is, poorer countries on the whole tend to have weaker institutions), it is apparent that *democratization can occur even with low levels of insti-*

tutional development. Arab countries transitioning from highly personal-istic regimes will have considerable state-building challenges, and those transitioning from strong institutionalized authoritarian systems will require the type of thorough institutional reform that was needed in Eastern Europe, but democracy need not founder on these challenges.

Implications for Libya, Yemen, and Syria

The regimes in Tunisia and Egypt were the first to topple in the Arab Spring in the early months of 2011, but others followed or continue to be under pressure for change. The uncertainty in the region, and a new recognition of the fragility of its regimes, raises the question of whether lessons drawn from previous democratic transitions and applied to Egypt and Tunisia are also relevant to these other cases.

Unlike Egypt and Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, and, if the Assad regime ultimately falls, Syria face or will face the dual burden of managing political transition while recovering from or continuing to cope with protracted violent conflict. Among other things, lifting this burden will require physical reconstruction; amelioration of sectarian, regional, and other intergroup animosities exacerbated by conflict; and disarming of militias and other armed elements. These countries face many of the same stabilization and state-building challenges that other postconflict countries faced in recent decades, including reintegration of former fighters, security institution reform, and reform of other state institutions.

Libya needs to build a framework for governance and institutions of civil society virtually from scratch. Moreover, compared with its neighbors, Libya faces a much starker problem of weak internal cohesion, given tribal and regional splits within the country and the lack of state institutions that often serve as glue in countries riven by such internal divides. Libya may be unique as a middle-income economy with a level of institutional development akin to that of a failed state. In this regard, Libya's transition will be more severely tested than Egypt's or Tunisia's.

The lack of cohesion is evident also in the competing visions for Libya: Islamist versus secular and centralized versus federal. Tensions between easterners and westerners and between expatriate returnees and those who continued to live under Qaddafi feed into these frac-

tures. The array of militias that are tied to different tribes and locales, and that have yet to be disbanded or incorporated into state institutions, makes these fractures especially dangerous. Ethnic divisions between Berbers and Arabs have surfaced as well. Libya's lack of cohesion is far more acute than in any of the cases we examined. Turkey continues to face ethnic divisions (between Turks and Kurds), and competing visions of the role of Islam in politics continue to be salient, but these have been managed against a background of much greater institutional strength than Libya has.

Libya also has the challenge of building a democratic state in a country systematically depoliticized by the former regime. The lack of competitive elections, absence of political parties, and tight regulation of civic life deprived Libyans of any avenue for genuine political participation.

Moreover, the external environment figured much more heavily in Libya's revolution than was the case in Tunisia and Egypt, where the revolutions were internally driven. The ability of the Libyan opposition to depose Qaddafi was dependent upon NATO intervention. It remains to be seen whether external assistance artificially inflated the support commanded by the then-opposition forces, papering over residual support for Qaddafi from those who benefited from the regime and have much to lose in the new Libya. The conflict between Misrata and Bani Walid is just one manifestation of a broader struggle between the winners and losers in post-Qaddafi Libya.

Efforts in Libya to disband or bring under control the groups of fighters cobbled together to challenge Qaddafi's forces could prove much harder than subordinating an institutionalized military to civilian control. The Libyan militias have disparate motivations and characteristics; they have no barracks to return to; they may not have regular employment; and they may not trust political leaders in a landscape of uncertainty. And since the central government has scant forces of its own, it has been slow to move against militias that still outgun them.

Yemen is a tribal society riven by internal divides, with pockets where the central government has essentially ceded control. However, unlike Libya, the transition in Yemen appears to share important characteristics with some preceding democratization experiences. In partic-

ular, in early 2012, Yemen initiated the type of negotiated, or so-called pacted, transition seen in many of the Latin American cases, as well as in Spain. In Yemen, the pacted nature of the transition pertains narrowly to Saleh's relinquishment of the presidency and the fate of those tribes, military units, and public sector personnel that were loyal to him. As in Latin America, it appears those constituencies will need to be provided a soft landing for the transition process to persist.

An additional challenge facing Yemen is that it operates as a distributive state with few resources to distribute. Although Yemen's neighbors in the Gulf Cooperation Council have the means to purchase popular acquiescence through the distribution of oil rents, the Yemeni central government has had to rely on its sovereignty as a currency to bargain with. The Yemeni central government ceded control of large portions of the country in return for loose allegiance from the periphery. Center-periphery dynamics will be a major obstacle to consolidating democracy in Yemen. Unlike Egypt and Tunisia, Yemen will need to overhaul the structure of government and adopt a federal model that offers autonomy to its periphery in return for support for state institutions. In this respect, constitutional reform processes in Spain, Iraq, and elsewhere can provide helpful positive and negative lessons.

In Syria, the regime's crackdown on the uprising has devolved into a full-scale, bloody, and prolonged civil war. The conflict has a sectarian dimension that revolts in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen lacked. When the war ends, social tensions will likely remain high, and there will be a significant risk of revenge-seeking. The external dimension of the Syrian conflict (Iran backing the regime; Turkey hosting the armed opposition; and Saudi Arabia backing the Muslim Brotherhood and Sunni tribes in the East) suggests that foreign interference could be significant after a regime change.

If the Syrian military at some point tips its allegiance to the opposition, both intramilitary conflict and military rule are potential risks. Some units could remain loyal to the regime with others defecting, leading to force-onforce fighting. And if military elements overthrow the regime, it is not certain that they would hand over power to civilian leaders. Syria has a rich history of military coups, and of minorities seeing the strong hand of the state as protective. Those factors, along

with the fact that a power vacuum could transform Syria into an arena for regional proxy competition, would make it easy for the Syrian military to justify remaining in power.

Syria resembles Tunisia in terms of single-party control over the political sphere, but to a heightened degree. The Baath Party in Syria can be understood as a more totalitarian version of the Constitutional Democratic Rally in Tunisia. If Baath Party rule ends, Syria will face a similar problem of how to uproot that structure without provoking opposition from those who joined the party merely because it was the only game in town. On this issue, it will be useful to look to the process of de-Baathification in post-2003 Iraq for what it suggests negatively and positively about navigating this challenge.

Implications for External Support for Democratization

The lessons described above are directly relevant to policy development within the countries undergoing political change. But they also can be used by external actors aiming to support democratization—foreign governments, international organizations, and international non-governmental organizations—as a basis for developing policies and diplomatic approaches that reflect reasonable expectations for Arab countries' transition paths, offer a deft mix of incentives and pressure, and draw useful ideas from past experiences. Here we highlight some specific policy implications of the preceding conclusions and the study as a whole relevant to external support.

First, an overarching word of caution emerges from our analyses of past transitions: *Beware of rules of thumb and simplified predictions* regarding how political change will occur in the Arab world. Many countries have defied expectations, doubtless because democratization is a complex, multidimensional process. The lack of simple rules of democratization is a *reason for optimism regarding the Arab Spring*. Regardless of the hurdles and setbacks experienced by many countries, trends world-wide and within most regions have been toward greater democracy, even in places that were once regarded as infertile ground. Moreover, the structural indeterminacy of democratization leaves considerable room for the policy choices of domestic actors to shape the course of events and for international actors to try to influence events in positive ways.

Though the Arab Spring is sometimes characterized as a unified phenomenon, past experiences show that even transitions inspired or triggered by the same external events unfold in accordance with their own particular dynamics. Thus, *policy approaches toward democratizing or potentially democratizing Arab countries should be individualized*, while bearing in mind that differential treatment by foreign governments based only their own interests rather than on internal conditions will be regarded skeptically. The same deference to local conditions should influence the approach to transitional justice, which should be guided principally by the sentiments of the population rather than by efforts to advance external agendas.

The course of events in Egypt and Tunisia—the countries that launched the Arab Spring—will likely have a special influence on the perspectives of authoritarians and oppositionists elsewhere. As of early 2013, Tunisia still seemed to have the best near-term chance of a successful democratic transition of any of the Arab countries that has seen a political opening. *Although Tunisia is a small country and not geopolitically significant, its transition process merits strong and well-coordinated political and material support from the international community, especially the EU and the United States*. Success there could set an important, positive example for a region that has been mired in authoritarianism, while failure could have a pernicious effect.

Policies should *take into account the long-term nature of democratization*; particularly in Libya and Yemen, democratization, if it occurs, is likely to take many years. No one should have the illusion that the international community can reach into a toolkit to help speed transitions to democracy.

In formulating policy approaches, it is important to *recognize the limits of outside influence on transition processes* once they are under way. Foreign aid in the aggregate has been shown to have no significant effect on democratization. The relatively small portion of foreign aid directed specifically at building democratic institutions and processes has been shown to have intended effects but, on the whole, modest ones. Elections and civil society support appear to be the most effective types of such aid. But overall, democracy assistance has not accounted for most of the variation seen in levels of democracy.

Foreign assistance intended to promote the consolidation of democracy in Arab states undergoing political change should be carefully targeted. *Elections support should be an important priority*, not only because it is likely to have greater intended impact than other types of aid but because elections can set transitions on a positive trajectory, particularly where the elections are consequential for political restructuring through constitutional reform. Elections are not sufficient to create democracy, but they are clearly necessary.

While recognizing the long-term nature of governance reforms and the limited proven effectiveness of foreign assistance programs aimed at supporting such reforms, opportunities should be maximized for *promoting institutional reform and helping democratic processes to work more efficiently and effectively*. Priorities for institutional reform should include building or strengthening accountability institutions, including effective and independent judiciaries; professional and independent electoral administrations; parliamentary committee structures and staffs; and political parties that are internally democratic and externally effective.

Civil society building should be another priority because civil society institutions have helped to propel democratization. This should include aid not only to independent organizations that promote democracy but also independent media, anticorruption and human rights monitoring groups, and organizations that provide civic education. But at the same time, care should be taken not to undermine local organizations with the taint of foreign money.

Among the institutional reform processes on which it will be important to focus is *development of civilian, democratic control of security institutions*. Such processes can be influenced through new or continued military-to-military relations; assistance in professionalizing militaries and internal security organs; and creation of strategic interdependence through security assistance, security agreements, joint exercises, and related measures. *Reform of police institutions is especially important* because these are the security organs that interact most closely with the population and will thus strongly affect a public's calculation of the extent to which democracy has brought real change.

Because the choices made by leaders in countries undergoing political change will be critical to the pace and outcomes of transi-

tions, *encouraging policies likely to help consolidate democracy* will be important. Among the relevant external actors, however, the United States has rather less leverage in the Arab world than it did with respect to the post-Cold War transitions, in some Latin American countries, and in places such as the Philippines. The United States is likely to find it challenging when the transition processes stumble (as such processes often do) to set the bar higher for new Arab regimes than it did for the old ones. Prior to the Arab Spring, the United States preferred stability to reform in the Arab world, even though stability has been achieved *through* political reform in many places (Indonesia and many Latin American countries, for example). Pivoting to support reform may be viewed skeptically among Arab leaders and publics.

Economic assistance may purchase some leverage, but in Egypt any amount of economic assistance bilateral donors reasonably could provide would be small relative to the size of the economy. For its part, Tunisia is relatively economically successful on its own, and Libya has oil resources to pay for its reconstruction and development. *Economic assistance is more likely to provide leverage in aid-dependent countries*, though experience in sub-Saharan Africa suggests that such leverage cannot be counted on to produce democracy.

The international community, through multilateral actions or international organizations, should *encourage creation of mutually reinforcing and supporting structures* in the Arab world, such as a regional organization for democracies that could attract and facilitate the delivery of institution-building assistance and reinforce democratization through moral suasion. It may be possible to emulate in modest ways the norm-setting and technical assistance elements of the European integration framework. Channeling external assistance through a regional organization may also be politically more palatable than direct bilateral assistance for some recipient countries.

Mutual reinforcement of democratization could occur, and be encouraged, among civil society groups across the Arab world, as well as among state institutions. In this sense, the democratization process could build on the shared experience of many people in the Arab world in seeing the vulnerability of authoritarian regimes exposed, realizing new possibilities, and being inspired to forge a new future.